



Financial Management Career Program

by Ms Karen R. Johnson

PALACE Acquire Training Program—Looking to the New Millennium

As this century is drawing to a close, the Air Force is continuing to thrust its fast-paced technological superiority into the new millennium. To accomplish this goal, the Air Force is using the PALACE Acquire (PAQ) training program to attract high potential men and women to civilian careers as federal employees. As human resources within financial management dwindle due to regular and early retirements, base closures, and buy-outs resulting from downsizing efforts, senior leadership knows it must address and develop its current employees as well as recruit high potential financial professionals to meet future needs and demands.

To meet the future needs for financial managers, the Financial Management Career Program (FMCP) has participated in the PAQ program for 15 years. The PALACE Acquire training program is a centrally managed Air Force intern program structured to provide an aggressive three-year long-term training and development portfolio giving employees a career ladder for continued professional financial management growth.

The FMCP PAQ program recruits and selects high-caliber candidates; trains them to become competent, effective, and productive financial management employees; provides them with the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful performance; provides promotion opportunities to interns successfully completing required training and developmental assignments; and provides challenging work assignments where the intern can excel. Budget analysts and cost analysts are hired at the entry level GS-7 grade with a target grade of GS-11.

Purpose

The FMCP uses the PAQ program to attract and develop men and women with management potential to careers in financial management. Financial management interns serve as financial managers and advisors to commanders and senior Air Force leadership, budget for financial resources, provide cost and economic analyses, manage financial systems, ensure internal controls and procedures are adequate, and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

Allocations

Each spring the AFPC Recruiting Office, Randolph AFB (AFPC/DPKR) submits a call letter to the MAJCOMs, requesting they identify potential PAQ positions required the following fiscal year. MAJCOM/FMs survey their bases and submit a consolidated request for financial management interns. The MAJCOMs commit to providing permanent positions for out-placement at the end of the internships. The FMCP prioritizes its requirements for fill and recruits for those positions which are funded by AFPC/DPKR.

Recruiting

Recruiting for interns is conducted for FM interns in both the fall and spring. Trained recruiters contact colleges and schedule interview dates. College selections are based on several factors: minority/disability classifications, previous successful recruitment experiences, proximity to AF bases, and location of the year's allocations. Announcement packages are sent to placement offices where recruiters will interview. Candidates need not be a graduate before applying, although the target audience is graduating seniors. By applying early, candidates can be offered a position 9 months prior to graduation, contingent upon completion of degree requirements. The security of employment upon graduation coupled with the completion of most paperwork guarantees a smooth transition upon in-processing at the base.

Qualifications

Two hiring authorities will be used in FY00. The Outstanding Scholar hiring authority has been the predominant hiring authority used in the past and requires the following to be qualified: (1) completion of a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a minimum overall grade point average (GPA) of 3.45 on a 4.0 scale in the undergraduate degree OR a letter from the Registrar or Dean stating class ranking in the top 10 percent of the undergraduate class or major subdivision of the college, such as the School of Business; (2) US citizenship; (3) mobility; and (4) ability for the Air F to obtain a SECRET clearance. Use of the Outstanding Scholar hiring authority allows our recruiters to interview candidates on campuses or at job fairs and for the FMCP to make selections for its internships.

The Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) qualification requirements are based on EITHER education or experience OR a combination of education and experience. The GPA requirement is 2.95 or higher out of a 4.0 as recorded on the official transcript; or as computed based on courses completed during the final two years of the curriculum. The ACWA was used for five designated positions for the FY00 recruiting cycle.

FMCP PAQ recruiters participate in a variety of job and career fairs throughout the US. Two open announcement periods are advertised each calendar year, normally one in February and one in August. This announcement allows interested candidates to apply by requesting an application through the mail.

Training Opportunities

Supervisors and interns are provided a Standard Training Plan (STP) upon the start of their assignment. Both the intern and supervisor provide input as to what projects the intern should accomplish in each year of the program. These are the elements upon which the intern is evaluated for promotion. The STP also lists potential training opportunities to include specific courses designed to provide knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) important to the intern.

First year interns attend the Basic Financial Management Officer Course (BFMOC) at Sheppard AFB TX for a 13-week course covering all aspects of financial management. Second year interns are encouraged to apply for the Aerospace Basic Course (ABC), a four-week course at Maxwell AFB. Interns are assigned to a flight and participate in a field exercise along with their military counterparts. Third year interns attend the Financial Management Staff Officer Course, Air Reserve Forces (FMSOC, ARF),

a two-week overview of financial management, prior to their final placement. Upon graduating, interns are encouraged to apply for Squadron Officer School (SOS) to continue their Professional Military Education (PME).

USDA courses, which cover a variety of financial management topics, are supported. Other vendors also provide financial management courses throughout the US.

Tuition assistance is provided for 2nd and 3rd year interns who meet eligibility requirements. Currently 100% of tuition costs are paid for by the Air Force. The intern pays books and miscellaneous fees. Degrees are not funded, although mission-related courses can be funded within budgetary constraints.

Other training opportunities requested by the supervisor are considered.

Direction

The FMCP PAQ Program has been successful with 80% of its graduates still in AF employment. Many of our graduates have already reached the GS-14 grade level. In FY99, 39 interns were hired with 36 anticipated to be hired for FY00.

As the next millennium approaches, talented interns will play a vital role in new financial management ideas, concepts and programs. Several factors are required to meet the challenges of the future: management's commitment to develop the intern, the opportunity of challenging assignments, an exposure to higher level management personnel, careful planning of training and developmental projects, and a demonstrated initiative by the intern.

With all of these positive attributes, the PAQ program will continue to flourish in the 21st century and help the AF meet its financial management goals.



Congratulations to all FMCP registrants nominated for Civilian Competitive Development Program (CCDP) and especially to the 16 selected for academic year 2000-2001:

Air Command and Staff
Tesa L. Lanoy, AFAA
Anna A. McNally, USSOCOM

Air War College
Charles R. Schroeder, USTRANSCOM

Capitol Hill Program
Alternate—Sandra P. Switzer, AFMC
Alternate—Linda M. Jean, AFMC

Civilian Advanced Management Program
William J. Kugel, AFMC

DoD Executive Leadership Course
Primary—Todd L. Schafer, AFMC
Alternate—Cathryn J. Kennedy, AFCAA

Excellence in Government Fellows
James R. Daniels, AFMC

Federal Executive Institute
Marth J. Evans, SAF/AQ
Rita J. Maldonado, AF/IL
James W. Salter, Jr., AFAA
John Edward B. Smith, AFBDA

Industrial College of the Armed Forces
Albert C. Ellett, SAF/FM
Ranae Pepper Woods, AFCAA

ICAF Senior Acquisition Course
Ann Cecile McDermott, SAF/AQ

